

Calling God, open our ears to hear you and our hearts to know you, through these words, humbly offered. Amen

As one who has trouble sleeping through the night, today's scripture story leaves me half marveling, half incredulous at the calm with which both Samuel and Eli deal with these constant interruptions to their sleep.

Samuel wakes up to his name being called and runs to Eli, waking him up with his eagerness to respond. Not once, not twice, but three times they are both awakened.

I'm imagining this happening over an extended period through the night. You know what I mean? You just nicely settle into a deep sleep, only to be awoken with someone calling your name. The voice is so real, so tangible in your mind, you're sure it must be the person in the next room, or in the bed beside you.

So, you respond, in turn, waking them up! "Nope, not me" they say. "Go back to sleep and let me do the same."

You both toss and turn and wrestle the blankets and fluff your pillow, trying to find that just right position that allows you to fall back to sleep. Finally, after what seems like half the night, your body once again relaxes, slipping into a deep sleep.

It seems like mere seconds however, before you hear it again ... your name being called. Loud and clear and crisp, and again you turn to your bed partner or your house partner or your friend walking beside you...perhaps a little annoyed that they've woken you a second time.

Of course, they're no more thrilled that you have reciprocated with your own wake up call. "No, not me. Go back to bed and let me sleep!!"

Not once, not twice, but three times, or in some cases maybe several more we are called to wake up! Until suddenly, it becomes clear, that the voice we are hearing, the one that awakens us to the needs of the world, is indeed the voice of God.

It makes me wonder how often God calls our names, invites us to do something hard, something easy, something, perhaps, we don't particularly want to do.

I wonder how often God calls our names and we don't recognize the voice.

I suspect the times are too numerous to count.

But today, I want to celebrate those times when we do hear, when we do listen, and we do understand. Those times when we respond "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

This congregation of St. Paul's, Kelowna, has ministered to each other and to the wider community for 75 years! Isn't that remarkable?! Some of us have been here since the beginning, or close to it. Others of us came any number of years later. But we all had a hand in making this Community of Faith what it is.

As we move ever closer to establishing a new congregation, a larger, even more vibrant congregation, we celebrate those who have served to bring St. Paul's to this place of honour and grace.

We celebrate everyone who heard God's voice and stepped up to serve. I didn't dare make a list of every volunteer, because I was sure someone would be missed. But I do want to recognize each one of you for the roles you've taken on over the last 75 years. So ...

If you ever sat on the **Board/Council** – wave your hands and keep waving long enough for us to scan our screens and see you.

If you ever sat on **M&P** ...

If you were ever a **Trustee** ...

If you served on the **Pastoral Care Team** ...

If you taught **Sunday School** ...

If you helped with the **Youth group** ...

If you ever sat on a **short-term committee or working group** ...

If you were on the **In-Reach Committee** or helped **prepare or serve food** for funerals or weddings or congregational gatherings ...

If you were on or volunteered with the **Outreach Committee** ...

If you served as the **Treasurer** ...

If you **counted the offerings**

If you were on the **Board/Council Executive** – Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary ...

If you were on a **Building/Property Committee** ...

If you were a member of the **UCW** ...

If you sang in the **choir** ...

If you played **music in worship** ...

If you have been a **reader** ...

If you were a **greeter or usher** ...

If you worked on or with the **slides and projection** ...

If you **prepared communion** ...

If you **hung banners and prepared the sanctuary** ...

If you did **janitorial** work ...

If you did **gardening/grass cutting** ...

If you **prayed for the work of the church** ...

If you **prayed for your minister(s)** ...

If you **served as a minister** ...

If you **lived your faith out in the wider world ...**

And these are just the people that here with us today. I invite you to think back on those who are no longer with us. Perhaps they have died, are unable to worship with us, or maybe they have moved to another city, but when they were here, they were actively involved in the ministry of St. Paul's . As you think of them, unmute yourself and speak their name into this gathered community ...

My beloveds, the church would not be the church without each and every one of you and the ministries you have been involved with through your hundreds of thousands of volunteer hours. It is because of you, that St. Paul's has had a rich and vibrant 75 years of service in this community.

And so, we celebrate with joy and gratitude the times when you were called by God and this congregation, to serve in leadership and you responded "Speak for your servant is listening".

Your ministry was, is and will continue to be a blessing, an honour, and a responsibility that recognizes your special gifts. You were called to work among us, with us and on our behalf. You did this with grace, compassion and integrity. We thank you for offering your best to God, and to all God's people. St. Paul's is the strong, faithful community it is, because your leadership showed us the way.

Today we honour each and every one of you, knowing that your service does not end here, but will continue throughout the coming years, in many and varied ways, in the new Community of Faith we are developing.

And so we pray,

Loving God, over the years, you have called all of these people to serve you. You sent your Holy Spirit to be upon them, enabling them to be about your work in the church and in the wider world. We give thanks that you help them to fulfill their responsibilities, knowing that leadership gave us all the ability to reflect your love and grace always and in all ways. Thank you for each of them and for their willingness to hear your voice and respond. Amen.

Dear ones, in the words of our own Myrtle Radke, 'you are blessed to be a blessing', now and forever. Thanks be to God!